



National Park Service
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Freedom Riders National Monument Celebration Set for May 13

Interim Visitor Center now open at Anniston City Hall

ANNISTON, AL – The National Park Service and local partners will host a community celebration in Anniston, Alabama, on May 13, 2017 to mark the recent establishment of Freedom Riders National Monument.

The dedication event — organized by Calhoun County, Alabama; the City of Anniston, Alabama; The Conservation Fund; the Freedom Riders Park Committee; and the National Park Service — will take place from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm, Saturday, May 13, 2017 outside the historic Greyhound bus depot on 1031 Gurnee Ave., Anniston, Alabama 36201. The event is free and open to the public. More details are forthcoming.

STATEMENTS

Stan Austin, National Park Service Regional Director: “We look forward to dedicating the new Freedom Riders National Monument with our partners who were central to the park’s establishment. The park preserves and interprets an important chapter in America’s modern civil rights movement.”

Jack Draper, City of Anniston Mayor: “The excitement level in our community has not abated since we first learned of the national monument designation. We are energized moving forward and can’t wait to celebrate on May 13th. We have really come together as a community in support of this much deserved recognition for the Freedom Riders. The story of their bravery and sacrifice needs to be told and we are proud that the National Park Service will be the story teller.”

Fred Wilson, Commissioner for Calhoun County: “We are proud of the Monument’s establishment and the part the County has played in making that happen. We look forward to the continued support and efforts from the National Park Service, City, and community in completing this project. Like the City, we at the County are excited and look forward to May 13th! ‘The dream is alive!’ ”

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INTERIM VISITOR CENTER

Information about visiting Freedom Riders National Monument may be found in the reception area of Anniston City Hall at 1128 Gurnee Avenue, Anniston, Alabama 36201. Hours: Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Visitors to the Anniston City Hall will also find their official Freedom Riders National Monument cancellation stamp. The Passport To Your National Parks® program is one of the most popular ways to preserve memories of visits to America's national parks. The program includes a series of books in which to collect park cancellations (or "stamps"), cancellations that can be collected at nearly every national park, an annual set of commemorative stamps, and a companion app. The program is run by Eastern National, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit cooperating association that supports the interpretive, educational, and scientific programs and services of the National Park Service and other public trust partners. For more information, please visit <http://easternnational.org/what-we-do/passport/>.

BACKGROUND

Freedom Riders National Monument was established as a unit of the National Park System by [Presidential Proclamation](#) on January 12, 2017 in recognition of the nationally significant events that took place in Anniston and Calhoun County, Alabama in 1961 during the modern civil rights movement.

On May 14, 1961, a small interracial band of "Freedom Riders" challenged discriminatory laws requiring separation of the races in interstate travel. They were attacked by white segregationists, who firebombed the bus. Images of the attack appeared in hundreds of newspapers, shocking the American public and spurring the Federal Government to issue regulations banning segregation in interstate travel.

ABOUT THE PARK

Freedom Riders National Monument is a new unit of the National Park System. The park includes the former Greyhound Bus Station located at 1031 Gurnee Avenue in downtown Anniston where segregationists attacked a bus carrying Freedom Riders in May of 1961, and the spot six miles away on the side of the highway where they firebombed the hobbled bus and attempted to trap the Freedom Riders inside it.

- **Greyhound Bus Depot (1031 Gurnee Avenue)** On Sunday, May 14, 1961, a group of segregationists, including members of the Ku Klux Klan, attacked the bus carrying African American and white Freedom Riders. The mob threw rocks, broke windows, and slashed the tires of the bus. Following police intervention the bus was able to depart for Birmingham, with the mob in pursuit. The former bus station is not currently open to the public. Today, the side of the adjacent building that borders the bus station's driveway features a mural and educational panels about the events of May 14, 1961.

The National Park Service is partnering with the City of Anniston to restore the Greyhound bus depot to its appearance on May 14, 1961. In the coming years, the Greyhound bus depot will be developed to accommodate visitors, but it is currently closed. The National Park Service will also work with Calhoun County and the Freedom Riders Park Committee to develop a visitor experience at the Bus Burning Site. In the meantime, please observe traffic safety rules and respect the private property adjacent to the site.

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- **Bus Burning Site (Old Birmingham Highway/State Route 202)** At this site, about six miles outside Anniston, the slashed tires of the Greyhound bus gave out and the driver was forced to pull over. The segregationist mob continued its attack, and someone eventually threw a bundle of flaming rags into the bus that exploded seconds later. Joseph “Little Joe” Postiglione, a freelance photographer, captured the scene. Little Joe’s photographs of the burning bus—which appeared in hundreds of newspapers on Monday morning—became iconic images of the civil rights movement. An Alabama Historical Marker identifies the site of the bus burning. Please note that the houses located nearby are private residences (near the intersection of Old Birmingham Highway and Barkwood Dr., Anniston, AL 36201).

The Greyhound Bus Station is part of the Anniston Civil Rights and Heritage Trail, which includes nine sites associated with the struggle for civil rights in Anniston. A self-guided driving tour is available online at: annistoncivilrightstrail.org (Please note that website is only accessible with a mobile device). Sites on the Anniston Civil Rights and Heritage Trail, outside the monument, which are associated with the 1961 Freedom Rides include:

- **Anniston Memorial Hospital (400 East 10th Street)** With great trouble the Freedom Riders made their way to the Anniston hospital, which provided little in the way of treatment, and where they found themselves once again under siege by a white mob. Their torment eventually ended when deacons dispatched by Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth of Birmingham’s Bethel Baptist Church, rescued them and drove them to Birmingham. The hospital is part of the Anniston Civil Rights and Heritage Trail and is marked with a sign.
- **Trailways Station (1018 Noble St.)** At this station, a second group of Freedom Riders stopped before departing for Birmingham. During their brief stop, a group of white men boarded and physically forced the Freedom Riders to segregate. The segregationists harassed the Freedom Riders throughout the two-hour ride to Birmingham. In Birmingham, the Freedom Riders were attacked by a mob of segregationists. The former Trailways Station also features a mural and educational panels.

As the National Park Service and community partners develop future opportunities to experience and learn about Freedom Riders National Monument, information and updates will be posted on the park’s official website <https://www.nps.gov/frri/index.htm> and social media accounts <https://www.facebook.com/FreedomRidersNPS> and <https://twitter.com/FreedomRidersNPS>

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